

## Characteristics of Postmodernism

Since we're building off of Modernism for this discussion, let's continue the model of five primary characteristics.

1. **Rejection:** Postmodernism rejects the values, morals, and culture of the previous generation(s) by understanding that our lived experience is only a sliver of the human experience—whether in art, literature, film, or life.
2. **Suspicion:** Postmodernism's rejection of the values, morals, and culture stems directly from its inherent suspicion of the highly structured, artificially organized world. This suspicion seeks to investigate the underlying power structures of those dominant ideologies (beliefs, values, morals, social codes, etc.).
3. **Revelation:** Postmodernism resists making too much meaning out of interior materials, unlike the Modernists (and New Critics). Instead, Postmodernists want to reveal the truth about the world as it really is. Think about it like this, in terms of *The Wizard of Oz*: Modernists want to see an organic meaning buried by the Wizard's curtain; Postmodernists want to see how he uses the curtain and to understand what led to this in the first place. They want to reveal the man behind the curtain, as it were.
4. **Ambiguity:** Postmodernists, because of their desire to reject, to be suspicious of, and to reveal, revel in ambiguity like no other group—including the New Critics. Postmodernists enjoy the multiplicity of meanings and contexts for understanding those slivers of life that we call art, literature, and film. Instead of trying to force things into coherent meanings, Postmodernists simply enjoy the different ways in which the world can mean.
5. **Connection:** All of the other traits lead to a kind of rejecting, suspicious, revelatory, and ambiguous openness about art, literature, film, and life, in general. This doesn't mean that life or culture has no meaning, but it does mean that culture has no SINGLE meaning—life doesn't either, for that matter. Readers must supply their connections in the world and make smaller, though still significant, meanings out of these connections.